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REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS

South Africa:* draft resolution

Assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 49/174 of 23 December 1994,

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General 1/ and the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2/

Bearing in mind the fact that most of the affected countries are least developed countries,

Convinced of the necessity to strengthen the capacity within the United Nations system for the implementation and overall coordination of relief programmes for refugees, returnees and displaced persons,

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* On behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of African States.

1/ A/50/413.

2/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 12 (A/50/12).

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Welcoming the prospects for voluntary repatriation and durable solutions to the refugee problems throughout Africa,

Recalling its resolution 49/7 of 25 October 1994, in which it endorsed the convening of a regional conference on assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in the Great Lakes region,

Taking into account resolution CM/Res.1588 (LXII) on refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa, adopted by the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity at its sixty-second ordinary session, held at Addis Ababa from 21 to 23 June 1995, 3/

Recognizing the need for States to create conditions conducive to the prevention of flows of refugees and displaced persons and to voluntary repatriation,

Bearing in mind that the majority of refugees and displaced persons are women and children,

1. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General and the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees;

2. Notes with concern the effects of political instability, internal strife, human rights violations, foreign intervention, poverty and natural disasters, such as drought, in increasing the number of refugees and displaced persons in some countries of Africa;

3. Expresses deep concern at the serious and far-reaching consequences of the presence of large numbers of refugees and displaced persons in the receiving countries and the implications for their security, their long-term socio-economic development and the environment;

4. Expresses its appreciation and strong support for those African Governments and local populations which, in spite of the general deterioration of socio-economic and environmental conditions, as well as over-stretched national resources, continue to accept the additional burdens imposed by increasing numbers of refugees and displaced persons, in compliance with the relevant principles of asylum;

5. Commends the Governments concerned for their sacrifices, for providing assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and for their efforts to promote voluntary repatriation and other measures taken to find appropriate and lasting solutions;

6. Expresses its gratitude to the international community for humanitarian assistance it has continued to render to refugees and displaced persons and to the countries of asylum, and calls upon it to continue to provide assistance to the millions of refugees and displaced persons in Africa;

3/ See A/50/647, annex I.

7. Expresses its concern regarding instances, in some parts of Africa, where the fundamental principle of asylum is jeopardized as a result of unlawful expulsion, refoulement, or other threats to life, physical security, dignity and well-being;

8. Welcomes the strengthening of cooperation between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Organization of African Unity at all levels, and urges the two organizations, with relevant subregional bodies, United Nations and non-governmental organizations, the international community and the Governments concerned, to increase their efforts to address the root causes, work out strategies and find durable solutions to the problems of displacement in Africa;

9. Also welcomes the initiatives of the High Commissioner to implement General Assembly resolution 49/7, and endorses the Plan of Action adopted by the Regional Conference on Assistance to Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in the Great Lakes Region, held at Bujumbura from 15 to 17 February 1995, as a framework for solution-oriented approaches to the humanitarian problems in the Great Lakes region;

10. Calls upon the Office of the High Commissioner to intensify its protection activities by, inter alia, supporting the efforts of African Governments through appropriate training of relevant officers and other capacity-building activities, disseminating information about refugee instruments and principles and providing financial, technical and advisory services to accelerate the enactment or amendment and implementation of legislation relating to refugees;

11. Expresses its appreciation for the efforts of Governments and for the important work being done by the Office of the High Commissioner, United Nations organizations, the International Organization for Migration, non-governmental organizations and other cooperating bodies on the implementation of voluntary repatriation of refugees in Africa, and calls upon the Office of the High Commissioner, in conjunction with the Organization of African Unity and Governments concerned, subregional groupings and other interested parties, actively to continue to seek sustainable solutions to the refugee problem in Africa, in particular through facilitating voluntary return in a dignified and orderly manner;

12. Appeals to Governments, United Nations and non-governmental organizations and the international community to create conditions that can facilitate the voluntary return and the early rehabilitation and reintegration of refugees;

13. Commends the Governments of the Great Lakes region and the High Commissioner on their initiatives to promote repatriation within the framework of tripartite agreements on voluntary repatriation of refugees in the region;

14. Encourages the Office of the High Commissioner to continue to cooperate with the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in emergency humanitarian situations in Africa;

15. Calls upon the Office of the High Commissioner, in conjunction with host Governments, United Nations and non-governmental organizations and the international community, to undertake an early assessment of the negative impacts of large refugee concentrations on the host communities, with a view to initiating timely and concrete measures to prevent damage and to assist in its repair, especially damage caused by mass refugee influxes to the environment and ecosystems in host countries;

16. Notes with satisfaction the voluntary return of millions of refugees to their homelands following the successful repatriation and reintegration operations carried out by the Office of the High Commissioner with the cooperation and collaboration of many countries hosting refugees, and looks forward to other programmes to assist the voluntary repatriation of all refugees in Africa;

17. Expresses its concern about the long stay of refugees in certain African countries and calls upon the High Commissioner to keep under review her programmes in those countries, taking into account the increasing requirements there;

18. Expresses its appreciation to the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner, the specialized agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, donor countries and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations for their assistance in mitigating the plight of the large number of refugees, returnees and displaced persons;

19. Expresses the hope that additional resources will be made available for general refugee programmes to keep pace with refugee needs;

20. Calls upon Governments, United Nations organizations, non-governmental organizations and the international community as a whole to strengthen the emergency response capacity of the Office of the High Commissioner on the basis of the experience of the emergency in Rwanda, and to continue providing needed resources and operational support to Rwandese refugees and the host countries until a permanent solution can be implemented;

21. Also calls upon the international donor community to provide material and financial assistance for the implementation of programmes intended for the rehabilitation of the environment and infrastructure in areas affected by refugees in countries of asylum;

22. Further calls upon Member States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to continue to provide the necessary support and financial assistance to the High Commissioner to enhance her capacities and abilities to implement emergency operations, care and maintenance activities and repatriation and reintegration programmes for the benefit of refugees, returnees and, as appropriate, internally displaced persons;

23. Appeals to Member States and international and non-governmental organizations to provide adequate financial, material and technical assistance for relief and rehabilitation programmes for the large number of refugees,

voluntary returnees and displaced persons and victims of natural disasters and to the affected countries;

24. Requests all Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to pay particular attention to meeting the special needs of refugee women and children;

25. Calls upon the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, United Nations humanitarian organizations, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, regional and international financial institutions, the International Organization for Migration and non-governmental organizations to increase the capacity for coordination and delivery of humanitarian emergency assistance and disaster relief in general, and to engage specifically in the building of capacity to mobilize effective regionalized burden-sharing by the High Commissioner, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, United Nations humanitarian organizations, States and others concerned in respect of asylum, relief, repatriation, rehabilitation and resettlement of refugees, returnees and displaced persons, including those refugees in urban areas;

26. Requests the High Commissioner to review her general programmes in Africa to take account of the increasing requirements in that region and with a view to continuing her efforts and expanding her activities, within the context of effective regional burden-sharing with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, other appropriate United Nations humanitarian organizations, the Organization of African Unity, other intergovernmental organizations, regional organizations and governmental and non-governmental organizations, in order to consolidate aid and increase essential services to refugees, returnees and displaced persons;

27. Requests the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive and consolidated report on the situation of refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, under the item entitled "Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions", and an oral report to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1996.